

**Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership
Education, Outreach, & Research Committee
DRAFT Minutes - May 17, 2021 3-5pm**

Committee Members present: Beth Girshman, Chair; Kate Lindroos Conlin, Joe Novak, Keith Nislow, USFS/UMass; Rick Peltier

Others present: Robert O'Connor and Whit Sanford - Board members; Dicken Crane, Windsor alternate; Hank Art, Board Chair; Lisa Hayden, Admin. Agent;

3:06 p.m. - Call to order

Joe motioned to forego approving minutes from 3/29 until next time so there is time to review, seconded by Kate, all approved.

Letters of support for Forest Legacy from town:

- An example letter from recent DCR guest speaker has been shared. Board involvement is needed to seek a letter of support from each town.

Mission Statement:

- There was discussion about the challenge of writing a mission statement without knowing where the Partnership stands with the U.S. Forest Service and their technical service offer. Keith noted that the Forest Service wants to be responsive to what the Partnership wants their role to be, and particularly to be available for technical support and research and grant opportunities. Joe stated that he would like an official commitment from the Forest Service as a follow-up to the Shared Stewardship Agreement that was signed.
- Hank stated that he sees the audience for the Committee is the public and the Board, and the Committee should develop what it sees as its responsibilities to the Board, as well as research needs, education for the public, and for a forest center.
- Kate offered to make a Google document to begin drafting a mission statement.

Connecting to other funding sources:

- Robert suggested the following areas for funding: stewardship outreach, a demonstration forest and a research forest, a grant for climate practices in town forests, town forests as an outreach tool and available for tours, and that some funding could also become available from DCR's working forest initiative for stewardship planning.
- Dicken suggested that grants should not be solely limited to town forests, as not all towns have them. For example, Windsor doesn't have a town forest but has a lot of important areas for resilience that could use support for planning, and research is needed in these forests too.
- Lisa stated there will be an update on the climate resilience planning pilot project at the Board meeting, with funding for about a dozen climate stewardship plans expected, and how a larger program could work.

- Kate mentioned there is a new RCCP habitat grant with \$1.5 million to spend on private lands in the next 2 years, and the Committee should advertise existing grant opportunities.
- Whit mentioned her project of developing a spreadsheet of funders, and how we could name priorities.

Website:

- Whit proposed linking to nonprofits and grants on the MTWP website, saying that we are basically invisible to towns as of now, and there is a need to develop the website more, something that could be proposed to the Board.
- Joe suggested the need for a constant webmaster to have the website work well.
- Lisa noted there is about \$10,000 in the Agent budget for a website contractor. NEFF would contract out this work. The Committee could also be involved in reviewing applications if interested.
- **Kate made a motion that NEFF hire a consultant to develop and design, supervise and steward, an initial website to begin getting the message out. Beth seconded. Joe proposed that Committee members sit in on interviews. Beth and Kate volunteered. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.**
- Dicken suggested there is a need to learn more about forests and the impact of climate as a community and this message should be embedded in all we're doing. The tone should be that 'We are all here to get educated, not here to educate you. This is about all of us learning.' The emphasis should be on inclusivity and complexity of the issues.

Site Walks/Outreach:

- Kate proposed partnering with land trusts and others to engage the community. She will compile a Google document of all the possible spaces and facilitators.
- Robert noted that forthcoming grants for towns could spur site visits, with walks at places funded.
- Keith noted the USFS has a UAS drone lab coordinator that could help (UAS = unmanned aircraft systems). This is the spatial analysis lab (SAL) at the University of Vermont <https://site.uvm.edu/sal/>. He could do a fish, forest, and streams video.
- Dicken has experience with site walks and would be happy to volunteer. He suggested a drone could show the diversity of the landscape and go a long way in educating and work against broad-stroke solutions.
- Hank would be happy to do one in the Hopkins forest, focused on changes over 250 years and climate-related effects. He remarked that a public meeting showcasing the different grants is planned later this year. This could prompt a press release. An effort should be made to represent all the communities.
- Beth suggested a seasonal schedule for walks – perhaps one in the fall, and one in the winter. She asked Keith if there is a role to talk to communities about wildfire. Keith responded that programming could speak to multiple dimensions of fire and fire risk, from pitch pine fire-dependent, to oak-hickory systems, to northern hardwoods that burn rarely. The theme could acknowledge the range of ecosystems and the fact that climate

will change these systems, and how prescribed fire can be a management tool. Also, the role of tribes, tribal values, and tribal relationships to fire. It was noted that the USGS has a Pequot tribal liaison.

- Hank noted that the Munsee Stockbridge tribe would be interested in having a relationship in terms of Williams College lands. On Lisa's list to set up a meeting. The Stockbridge-Munsee Tribe is deeply into sustainable forestry:
<https://mohican.com/forestry/>

Brochure:

- The updated MTWP brochure is almost done and will be shared with the Board.

Research:

- Hank has students who can conduct research projects through the Williams College program of Environmental Planning and Design. One suggestion is for research about the current amount of waste wood. Dicken asked if the Partnership can connect what different people and organizations are working on, so things that are happening can be highlighted so we can move in the right direction faster.

5:00pm - Kate motioned to adjourn and Beth seconded. All agree.